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Officials From Viet In Capital for Talks

By Tom Lambert
Of The Herald Tribune Staff
WASHINGTON

Four key American officials from South Viet Nam have arrived here for four days of conferences "near Washington" on Vietnamese affairs, it was learned yesterday. The talks will begin tomorrow.

The four are Deputy Ambassador William Porter, Embassy political counselor Philip Habib, AID director Charles Mann, and Air Force Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Edward Lansdale, special assistant "on pacification" to Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge.

The four will attend "inter-agency meetings on Vietnamese matters" with Administration officials, a State Department spokesman said.

There were some indications that Barry Zorthian, chief of the United States Information Agency in Saigon, also might be here for the meetings to be held during President Johnson's continuing peace campaign.

Major interest in the quartet from Saigon centered on Gen. Lansdale, once a Central Intelligence Agency operative in South Viet Nam. It is understood Gen. Lansdale met yesterday with Vice-President Humphrey.

Gen. Lansdale was named last August to his post with Mr. Lodge. There were hints here then that his appointment was opposed by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and some of the latter's military aides, who reportedly objected to some of Gen. Lansdale's unorthodox methods and ideas.

Gen. Lansdale is credited with having helped quash the Communist Hukbalahap uprising in the Philippines after World War II and with assisting the late Ngo Dinh diem establish his government in South Viet Nam after he came to power in 1954.

The laconic ex-Air Force officer, a specialist in counter-insurgency, has been credited with sponsorship of various ideas for opposing guerrilla wars primarily through attempts to enroll popular support for besieged governments.

Gen. Lansdale and a 10-man staff of Far East experts have been working quietly for Mr. Lodge in Saigon, and little is known of their activities.

The return here of some of the Saigon Embassy's key political and aid experts suggests some of the forthcoming Jan. 8-11 meetings will focus on South Viet Nam's internal and economic affairs.